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Ruling Powers in History

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Ruling Powers in History

ADDRESS BY JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN AT THOM
ASTON, MAINE, ON THE THREE HUNDREDTH
ANNIVERSARY *of the VISIT of* GEORGE WAYMOUTH
to the ST. GEORGES RIVER, JULY SIXTH, MDCCCV

Elise M. Farrington
Brewer Maine



RULING POWERS IN HISTORY

ADDRESS BY

JOSHUA L. CHAMBERLAIN

AT THOMASTON, MAINE, ON THE THREE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VISIT OF GEORGE WAYMOUTH TO THE ST. GEORGE'S RIVER, JULY 6, 1905.

We have come here to celebrate, not a victory, nor a veritable beginning, but a passing incident, a visit; purposed, however, and well ordered, and taking significance from being closely linked with the movements which resulted in the English domination of these North Atlantic shores. Linked,—implying a connection, but not a cause; for no man can assign the cause of anything whatever that has happened in human history. We may know of conditions precedent, and *sine qua non*,—without which a thing could not have come to pass; but causes lie deep, germinated in the spiritual essence of things, both physical and psychical.

What we note here is the fact of Waymouth's visit, in a ship auspiciously named the Archangel, and kept in character by due observance of religious exercises on board, with high ends in view which prompted the kidnapping of some best specimens of the inhabitants for exhibition at home in verification of his reports, or proof of the capabilities of this virgin soil; claiming warrant, perhaps with religious consistency, by the Old

Testament tactics of the visit of the spies to the promised land beyond Jordan with instructions to bring back the best of whatever they could lay their hands on. This last is an important item; it supplies the link which connects this visit with immense results. For these good specimen products of the new country being consigned to some of the keen forecasters in England, woke a vital interest in the discoveries she had practically ignored for a century. We have the testimony of Sir Ferdinando Gorges, one of the chief promoters of Waymouth's voyage, to whom the study and instruction of these unwilling guests were committed, that "this accident," he called it, "was the acknowledged means under God, of putting on foot and giving life to all our plantations."

And these plantations were the forerunners, if not the immediate agencies, of a force whereby the English overcame the French, claiming by as good a title and holding by a prior and better occupancy. Fortunate Nahánada, Amoret, Skidwároes,—simple savages, helpless captives, but made vehicles of a divine communication fraught with the destinies of nations! Fortunate Waymouth,—the craft of man made part of the work of God! These it was then,—Waymouth's unwitting witnesses,—who woke the first whisper of that deep decree whereby New France should become New England, and passing the barriers of dissociating mountains, and owning only the mighty waters for boundaries, this land of ours should be held of neither crown, but by a nation to be born,—the people of these United States.

Thoughts come to us here: what was the force which effected this dispossession; what was its justification; what is, and is to be, the outcome. The whole case will be set before us to-day with skilful elaboration by chosen orators. For me, but few words.

And first, this was a matter of race. But what is race? It is something of blood. By that we mean certain specific tendencies, vital, spiritual, persistent. And in whatever intermingling, whether through innate affinities or outward inducements, a certain positive tendency will dominate, and will mark the resultant character.

Difference of race is an obvious fact, however accounted for. The Roman is different from the Greek; the Turk from the

Arab; the Hungarian from the German; the Irish from the English; the Japanese from the Russian. It is obvious also that physical surroundings do not determine these differences, for we find the physical conditions not so widely varied in these cases, — and the local situation, almost the same. Race differences are marked in the several provinces of one so-called nation,— as in France and Spain.

There is a current saying that man is the creature of his environment. That may be true of some; but a man so made is a poor kind of a man. No doubt all are affected more or less by environment; but the final character is determined by innate forces and susceptibilities. When we speak of environment, bear in mind that there are two kinds of it,—one, the obvious physical surroundings; the other, the atmosphere and contact of invisible spiritual influences. The inborn nature of man makes the selection, and determines the outcome. If this nature is dull, or indolent, or simply receptive, outward influences may prevail. But men and races that are foremost make themselves so by inborn force.

Physical geography in simple times had large effect on human character. Work and thoughts and habits of life must be so directed. But soon some aspiring mind begins to master outward conditions. The Dutch first made land where there was sea; now they are making sea where there is land. Physical features may some time determine the boundaries of nations. But sooner or later some force of men will change these landmarks. All history shows this. The structure and climate of a continent is in some sort a prophecy of its destiny. But this is made true only in the long run, when commingling and combinations of men have brought out the best traits in each type of manhood, and revealed the treasures of nature to be turned to human good. The Nile once made Egypt; now England makes the Nile. Aforetime men stood in awe of it; human life was its servant. Now the great barrage at the Assouan cataract, controlling the mighty waters, creates new seasons for human toil and puts the mastery in the hands of man. So English energy makes new environment, which in turn will serve to transform Egyptian character, and make a new Egypt. But it is man that has done it,—meaning by that blood and brain, observing the

work of God, reading in opportunity His purpose, and following His thought.

Now appears that other kind of environment,—the influences which we must call spiritual, having strangely no word in our language as yet exactly answering the conception and fact of an energy not embodied, but inspiring and governing human action. What we call the influence of mind upon mind is a marvellous power,—whether direct, in personal intercourse, or in wider circuits through social enlargement, or as representative in works of the spirit, as in eloquence, poetry, music, painting, sculpture, expressive fabrics of architecture, and mighty works of engineering. In such things thought lives, the vanished speaks. We are told that there are some mysterious laws in chemistry, whereby the susceptibility of certain elements ready to combine is so affected by the mere presence of some other element not itself commingling, as almost to control their behavior. That law of influence is a mighty one in all the worlds to which we belong.

We believe people are deeply influenced by their religion; their view of spiritual belongings. But to a great degree people influence any given religion by their personal temperaments. Christianity exhibits various phases in the Nestorian, the Coptic, the Greek and the Roman churches. And our modern Protestantism is sharply differentiated by Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, Puritan, Presbyterian and Methodist. In a certain way, acting and reacting on each other, they make a whole.

There is a perpetuating influence in the prevailing public sentiment and social order of a community. We make much account of the assimilating power of our political and social institutions upon the people immigrating into our country. This may be a saving grace for us in the present inundations of foreign race and blood, the overflowings of all peoples. But we shall find great difference in the capacity and capability of different people as to this transformation.

Nothing in this world seems fixed, one and the same for all. Human freedom makes certain things very uncertain. A gift depends on how we take it; environment and opportunity are what we make them. In this mass and mesh of things around us, some innate force allied, at least, to the spiritual, determines

destinies. It is so that race characteristics are wrought out, people by people, age after age.

But peculiar and prominent as these are, a pure race we scarcely find. Earliest history shows each race already of mixed blood, though differing decidedly each from each. This comes from certain strains of preponderant force, or readiness of combining power. Some we see almost repellant of combination. Look at the American Indian; stubborn in his characteristics. You can kill him, but you can't kill these out of him. Indeed it is these very characteristics that are killing him out. As a rule the mixed races are the ablest, physically and mentally. But it is not true that all mixed races are superior. It depends on what there was to mix. There is some intricate law about it. Mixture of elements within certain generic lines, but not too near specifically, produces increase of strength; taken from too near or too far,—deterioration and sterility. But true mixture is a harmony, working out all the variations of its persistent theme.

Here to-day we contemplate the beginning of the struggle of France and England for the domination of this continent. Which should win? He to whom it was given,—not by circumstance but by capability; not by force of quantity, but of quality. Two races in their main root almost identical; of the Viking blood, fierce in fight, deeply and richly mixed, the persistent vital energy ever readjusting its composite elements, giving to each a polarity of its own. The old Northmen conquered Normandy, planting their name in France, but taking the language and law of previous conquerors, the Roman, because these served their mastery; and these hold to this day. Their descendants, the Normans, conquered England, but took on the language of the conquered,—the deep-rooted mother tongue,—and also their laws, wrought out on the north shores of the Rhine and Scandinavian seas. These also to abide,—language and law;—and are mainly ours, here and now. Two peoples not so far apart in the dominating element of their origin, following the lines of different stimulus and impulse, developing characters peculiar and clearly marked. One fertile of ideas and quick of hand; the other slow of thought but stout of heart; one daring in overture, spirited in action; the other slowly resolving, but

resolute unto the end. So are they unto this day. One ever prompt, adroit, chivalrous, projecting beginnings; the other calmly observant, gathering force, biding time, effecting consummations. One leading the civilization of Europe, the other belting the globe! So the vision of to-day: the French overture here brilliant as the sky; the English consummation solid as the earth. And we who behold, proclaim it as a triumph of our race; but do not forget that there have passed into it other heroic and not lost beginnings.

Now for the right of it. By what right did England win? By right of some "higher law" declaring itself in mysterious ways as of better worth than right of possession. By authority of some overmastering force in human history, making the best of each the benefit of all, turning failure of one to profit of another, even overruling evil for final good. Justifications are on a great scale and far away, where all find their belongings. England entered where France had opened; took what she had made ready. So have I seen the osprey and the eagle; one with flashing wing dashing between sky and sea to snatch her prey; the other watching from some calm rock, then rushing to grasp the booty borne by the taker in mid air. This is natural law. This right through greater need or better use is admitted in the practice, and therefore is the law, of progress. True, this may also be the plea of the highwayman; but the natural law of society seems not the same as the moral law for the individual. Some races are better able to bring out the goods and uses of nature than others, and thus advance their own excellence. Soon or late, they take the precedence. And the acquiescence of others makes good the title. Is it not so? By what other right are we from the Old World holding this New World once belonging to a simpler race? And by what other right are the nations of Christendom doing many things disliked but approved by all? Is not the survival of the fittest the right of the strongest? And is not this the law of nature by which the world goes on, whether we will or no? And is not this of that great branch of the human law known as the customary?

Now, what is the outcome? Evidently it is not complete as yet. A phase of it is passing. We now on these long-coveted shores, descendants or successors of great actors here, have no

reason to regret accidents or issues of early history, nor to be ashamed of the character since wrought out, or of the work done for the world. In some of us is blood mingled of both great races battling here, but we are not sorry to be named of the race that if not first but latest in beginnings, is on the foremost front of the world's advance.

Three centuries have passed. Some climax has been reached. For here we see now the tide of ancient blood on the ebb. Our new generations are sending forth their boldest to meet the demand for energy on other shores, and to make history in turn. Peoples are taking their place whom we may deem not the equals of the outgoers. But who shall presume to judge the reasons of God's ways, or to know the rule of mixture in His chemistry? Some incomers are closely allied to us in blood, and readily enter into our aspirations and ideas. Others, though of blood wider and farther mixed, come gladly to us, and into our citizenship. At least they are taking up what goods of nature the outgoers have left not fairly tested. Is not this a certain progress?

A passing glance shows present movement, but not its meaning, nor the full tendency of things. In the great tides, currents are running many ways. The inward and outward set goes ever on by periods elsewhere determined. But there is a trend we cannot see; an ever increasing worth, to which our best work belongs.

What we may be sure of is our duty to hold fast the faith and practice out of which the sterling character of our fathers was evolved; to reverence those things which have enabled us to take part in the betterment of human conditions, the clearer recognition of the worth of manhood,—and if perchance it be held as some higher thing,—of womanhood. It is ours to cherish the principles and institutions which have secured for us light and liberty, and so hold them that all incomers shall enjoy these blessings and also be able to appreciate them and perpetuate them.

Prophecies are written both in the face of nature, and in the heart of man. Good has been wrought here, but most of good is yet to come,—to come to be. And in such times, when deeper knowledge of man and nature shall disclose deeper things of

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good, then may emerge a new composite life in which shall hold part our history and our hope. Perhaps even the physical features now forming boundaries of nationalities and of enterprise may take on truer meaning, and the shores of this great gulf named now of Maine, on whose outer edge the Gulf Stream and Arctic currents meet, are potent yet of God's deep purpose; and the peoples behind, seeing the vast reach of opportunity and the unity of their interests, will make of this stored and storied sea-front a vantage ground not only for exchange of their products but for the interchange of all best gifts and winnings for the world.

